

SOME MASONIC PROBLEMS

The comments published on Bro. Hungerford's articles make me wish to speak too, even though I may also be only a voice crying in the wilderness. With the mutually opposite views of D.D.H. and A.E.C., I feel in sympathy and J.T.T. has given an accurate diagnosis. Our last Grand Master, here, held constantly in his addresses to our lodges to the opinions expressed by D.D.H. but, if they are right and the utmost limit of Masonic achievement is to become a nursing mother for the various service clubs, then I must agree with A.E.C. that "Freemasonry is, as a whole, operating under false pretenses." There seems greater need than ever for the exercise of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth, so why keep our machinery idle?

Bro. Roucek, on page 114 (April), might have gone further and applied his "second problem" to Freemasonry the world over instead of only Continental Europe. The human qualities of our membership will not differ greatly anywhere and the old difference between Operatives and Speculatives seems reborn in the division between intellectuals and men of other types. It is likely they will always remain with us, and Bro. Roucek's solution goes far towards realizing a happy cooperation.

With this, however, there remains grave need for a sense of responsibility on the part of our Investigating Committees, through whose incompetency, largely, is due the influx of unsuitable material, which is a deterrent to efficiency in any direction of activity. A remedy against this can be found in the practice followed, I understand, by lodges in Switzerland. A local Brother, who had been stationed there during the War, spoke here several times after his return on his experiences and stressed the fact that entrance and advancement there were far more difficult than with us.

The lodge, in the city where he passed most of his service, was constantly occupied with benevolent work; not because of the demands of the War but as a normal condition by which applicants and initiates were tested before their membership could be completed. No candidate received more than one degree in a year's time and not only had his proposer and seconder to report on his behavior during the periods between these ceremonies, but the initiate had to give a written statement of his understanding thereof and of his experiences in trying to live up to them. On these reports would depend entirely his further treatment.

If my readers will stop to consider what a difference would result in the Freemasonry of North America if such a practice should by any means be inaugurated here, they will at once perceive why there is so much unrest and dissatisfaction amongst us under conditions wherein nothing of the sort is attempted. Unsuitable material would cease to obstruct Masonic progress, or make our offices ridiculous by their natural incapacity to meet such responsibilities.

This cannot be done as long as we put quantity and ceremonial so much in the place of quality and work, as at present, and allow all natural impetus to service of any sort outside our present narrow limits, to be continually turned aside from Masonic channels. The statement that we are not operative but speculative Masons, that our teachings are allegorical and without historical accuracy, should not be twisted into a reason for mere verbiage, regalia, temples and other externals.

Critics may justly point to the "Three Jewels" of British Masonry, to the Homes supported by some U. S. Grand Lodges, to the fact that 80 per cent of its revenue is earmarked for benevolence by the G. L. of Canada, in Ontario; but the core of this discontent is, like the Kingdom of Heaven, not outside but within each one of us. For we spend vast amounts which others direct into useful channels, yet as Lowell wrote - "The gift without the giver is bare." Some genius in psychology may yet earn our gratitude by devising a method whereby we can work individually to these ends, as well as pay others to do so.

N.W.J.H., Ontario.

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